SECURITY GRADING Contents checked for transfer to N.B. (N.B. The grading of this jacket must be the same as that of the highest graded D.R.O. UP document contained in it. The appropriate upgrading slip must be affixed when ever necessary.) (Sgd.) CONFIDENTIAL Date FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH DEPT. RESEARCH OFFICE TITLE: RESEARCH- MIDDLE NNECESSARILY S.U. OR P.A. THE REGIONAL COMMAND OF THE IRAQI (JULY 1968 - JULY 1969) B.C REFER TO REFER TO REFER TO င္ထ TO NAME DATE NAME NAME DATE DATE REGISTRY SEE: SEE: (and dept. when necessary) (and dept. when necessary) (and dept. when necessary) ဥ with replated Registry Address RESEARCH REGISTRY ROOM 612 RIVERWALK HOUSE SECURITY GRADING YEAR STAMP N.B. (N.B. The grading of this jacket must be the same as that of the highest graded UPG document contained in it. The appropriate upgrading slip must be affixed when ever necessary.) CONFIDENTIAL

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#### RESEARCH DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

The Regional Command of the Iragi Barath (July 1968 - July 1969)

#### I. Introduction

The Balath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coup of February 1963 in which Abdel Kerim Qasim was overthrown and assassinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Abdel Salam Aref. The Balath boasted that its eclipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to wait nearly five years, until July 1968.

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present regime in its proper

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present regime in its proper perspective against the background of Iraqi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differs from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportunist and not very united army officers.

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- II. The Background to the Coup of July 1968.
- clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretiveness and Clitism, its pan-Arabism as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotism, corruption and lack of administrative ability, and its use of violence and of the Mational Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.
- the distinction of having been the most unpopular regime ever to have governed Iraq, and President Aref who, whatever else his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the foibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real flair for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a regime which was not only detested, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.

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The Ba'ath which was ousted in the "apostasy" of November, 1963 (1) was no longer a united party, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militancy" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate Ba'ath groups in Iraq - the rightwing Barath, consisting mainly of old guard Balathists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Batath (Al Hizb al Batath fi Qutr al Irag), a leftwing group, Marxist and pro-Syrian in ideology (Al Barath al Yasiri), and a much smaller, extremist group, of which the leading personality was Ali Saleh al Saadi, whose gangsterist methods as Deputy Prime Minister and boss of the National Guard in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the rigine. It was the first of these, the

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Two such "apostasies" have taken place in the canon of current right-wing Ba ath political jargon - that of 18 Movember, 1963 resulting in the fall and disintegration of the Party in Iraq, and that of 23 February, 1966, in which Hafiz al Amin's regime in Syria was overthrown in the coup led by Saleh al Jedid.

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right-wing Ba ath, which participated in the coup of 17 July, 1968, and then itself carried out the further coup of 30 July; and while it has some claim to be regarded as representative of orthodox Ba athism, it is noticeable that, as happened with previous Ba ath regimes, both in Iraq and Syria, the expediencies of the exercise of power have frequently made nonsense of party doctrine.

III. The Coups of July. 1968.

6. On 17 July, 1968 a number of officers known as the "Palace Group", allegedly also members of the Arab Revolutionary Movement, in conjunction with a number of right-wing Ba'athists carried out a bloodless coup which resulted in the deposition and exile of President Abdel Rahman Aref. The part played by the officers was underlined by the appointment of one of their number, Colonel Abdel Razzag Nayef (Deputy Director of Military Intelligence) as Prime Minister, and of another, Lt.-Colonel Ibrahim Abdel Rahman Daud (0.C. Republican Guard Brigade) as Minister of Defence. The Presidency went to a veteran Barathist, General Ahmed Hassan Bakr, who had been Prime Minister in 1963, and the Ministry of the Interior to another, General Saleh Mehdi Ammash. The key posts in the Government

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were thus allotted to the planners of the 17 July coup, the remainder being given in the main to professionals who were experts in their respective spheres, Salih Kubba at the Ministry of Finance, Nasr al Hani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mahdi Hantoush at the Ministry of Oil.

The new Government was thus a coalition between old guard Ba'athists who were conservative in outlook and who tended also to be anti-Egyptian, anti-Communist and prepared, in the main, to follow fairly moderate, middle of the road policies, + the "Palace Group" tere-most-of them younger men with more progressive ideas, who would have liked to establish their rule on as broad (and so . not exclusively Ba'athist) a basis as possible, to come to terms with the Kurds and to follow a policy generally of Iraq for the Iraqis. In such a coalition it was thus only a matter of time before one of the groups moved against the other. The Ballathists were the more experienced and better prepared, and less than a fortnight after the coup the inhabitants of Baghdad were made aware, by the presence in the streets of the tanks of the 10 Armoured Brigade, that a new upheaval was taking place. The Prime Minister meanwhile

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and was there arrested and flown out immediately to Morocco. The Minister of Defence, who was visiting Iraqi units in Jordan, was similarly arrested and deported to Rome. It is believed that the driving force behind the new coup was that very experienced intriguer Saleh Mehdi Ammash, assisted by another ex-officer Balathist, Abdel Kerim Abdel Shattar al Sheikhli, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government. The coup, however, owed much of its success to the defection of the Commander of the Republican Guard who deserted his friends in the "Palace Group" and went over to the Balath.

9. Both coups demonstrated very clearly the present importance of the Guard and, to a lesser extent, of the Baghdad garrison, in the making and unmaking of Governments. The former had been greatly expanded, pampered and heavily armed by Abdel Salam Aref, and it was his successor's refusal to follow the advice of the "Palace Group" which precipitated the coup of 17 July. Again, in the coup of 30 July, it was the attitude of the Guard, or rather of its Commander, which appears to have been decisive, and it would seem that as long as the Government can be certain of the loyalty of the

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Guard and of the garrison of Baghdad it can be fairly confident of remaining in power, and if in addition it has the support of one other Divisional Commander it can consider itself all but invulnerable.

- IV. The Ba ath Administration.
  July 1968 July 1969.
- 10. The Ba'ath, a pan-Arab party with a supra-national organisation, has nevertheless built up an elaborate structure on a cell system (see Annex B) typical of a clandestine minority group, which it has indeed been for much of its existence. As a result it has evolved as an isolated, doctrinaire clite with little popular standing, and when it has come to power it has displayed the weaknesses of its development in its lack of the common touch and of the essentials of administrative efficiency.
- 11. As far as policy is concerned the Party is committed nominally to following the diotates of the International Command, but in fact the Regional Commands have a good deal of autonomy, and both in Syria, and even more so in Iraq, have followed independent policies imposed by local conditions. Moreover by the time the Iraqi Ba'ath returned to power in July 1968 the International Command, owing to

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a series of "apostasies", had lost much of its influence, and the regime itself is representative of one wing only of Iraqi Ba'athism. It can thus in fact be regarded as no more than a minority group within a minority group.

The framing and direction of policy is in the hands of the Regional Command Council, a body of 16 Ba'athists, only six of whom hold office in the Government (see Annex A). The programme which it has sketched out for itself is much concerned with consolidation of its own internal position. The usual lip service is given to pan-Arabism and the need to cooperate with other Arab countries, the UAR in particular, but the main emphasis has been laid on the need to allot key posts in the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence and Civil Service to loyal Party members. All services require to be purged of their non-Barath elements and steps are to be taken to indoctrinate sympathetic and malleable material. Further emphasis is laid on the dominant role of the Command Council, not more than a third of whom may hold Government posts, security in particular being kept under its direct control.

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13. As regards relations with other Parties efforts were to be made to secure the cooperation of the Nasserists, Nationalists and certain Communist groups, with a view to forming a National Front and broadening the basis of its support. From any such Front, however, such religio-political movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front were to be excluded, and every effort was to be made to undermine, and destroy rival Ba'ath groups. Finally a "positive attitude" was to be adopted towards imperialist-inspired plots against the regime. One mistake which was not repeated was that of openly re-establishing the National Guard, the excesses of which had contributed so much to the unpopularity of the 1963 regime. Propaganda was to be used with discretion and Party members were to be given suitable posts where they might make their political influence felt, but emphasis was laid on the need to avoid alarming the people. 14. In foreign policy the programme followed predictable lines, support, as noted above, for pan-Arabism, restricted however, to progressive countries only, military action against Israel and support for guerilla organisations, strengthening of relations with socialist countries, particularly those supporting the Arabs, continuance of the

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struggle against western imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and the promotion and consolidation of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf. 15. At home the regime pledged itself to bring the oil companies under national control to settle the Kurdish problem, to expedite agrarian reform and to expand irrigation, in all of which both at home and abroad, the Iraqi Command followed fairly closely timehonoured party doctrines of social reform, secularism, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism and promotion of Arab unity with, however, a greater slant to the left than might have been expected. The rigine prides itself on the moderation of its policies, though it is perhaps a contradiction in terms to speak of a moderate Ba'ath, a movement conspicuous always for the extremism of its ideology. Some groups are no doubt more moderate than others, but although the regime now in power describes itself as right-wing, its policies tend to follow patterns set by the USSR, Cuba and Yugoslavia.

16. It is to be remembered also that many in the regime are Barathists for opportunist reasons only. They are prependerently Sunnis from central Iraq who have little political sensibility and not much idea of how to

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achieve such aims as they have and little interest in maintaining such links as still exist with the rump of the International Command, as represented by Aflag and Bitar. Although opposed in theory to military autocracy, they are many of them ex-officers who have had to rely en the Army both to . bring them to power and to keep them there. To a great extent, therefore, they have to adapt their policies to the views of the senior officers among their supporters, and as suggested in paragraph 9 above, the. attitude of the Republican Guard and of the Baghdad garrison is of vital significance. The Régime in Action.

17. Despite a number of attempts to improve its popular image by creation of a National Front the regime so far has had singularly little success, largely because it is prepared to cooperate only on terms which other Parties find unacceptable. The Communists, though interested, want more socialism and less pan-Arabism; nor have they forgotten their persecution at the hands of the Basath National Guard in 1963. They have been alienated also by blatant manipulation of Trade Union elections. Nor have the Basaths efforts to bring in some of the smaller and

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less important political groups, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Talabani Kurds or the Socialist Unity Party, been any more successful, largely because once again, though to a lesser extent than in 1963, the Ba ath has shown itself unprepared to compromise. 18. It appears also to have achieved no great success in winning support in the Armed Forces, especially in those units on active service in Jordan and in the north, partly because of the severity of its anti-Balathist purges. It has further destroyed the integrity and efficiency of the Civil Service by placing Ba athists in all posts of importance regardless of qualifications, and has settled, rather more discreetly than in the past, a number of old scores by indiscriminate arrest and confinement of Nasserists, Communists, left-wing Ba athists and Islamic Front sympathisers, and in extreme cases does not appear to have stopped short of political murder.

19. The year in power has been devoted mainly to the consolidation of its position by methods which have become progressively more severe, and so correspondingly more unpopular. Increasingly it has had to resort to police methods directed in the main by the Mational Security Council in which the most influential

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voice is that of the doctrinaire and extreme Saddam al Takriti, Secretary-General of the Regional Command. It has shown also intelerance and inability to compromise in its treatment of minorities and foreign. interests (the expulsion of the European staff of the Jesuit Hikma University is only one case in point), and it has done nothing to satisfy Shipi apprehensions or to make more than half-hearted efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem. In domestic affairs it has achieved little and, as remarked above, the efficiency and honesty of the civil service has been depreciated further by the appointment of party members to posts for which they have no qualifications.

20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agreements with the Soviet bloc, (2) its harassment of the oil companies, its recognition of East Germany and its persecution of former political leaders on charges of collaboration with imperialism, and its hunt for, and execution, of alleged Zionist agents. It

<sup>(2)</sup> Recent examples are the sulphur deal with Poland, the agreement between INOC and Machinoexport (USSR) for supply of oil equipment and technical help; the loan of \$70 million from the USSR for development of the North Rumeila oilfield, and the \$84 million credit from East Germany for industrial projects.

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favours an all-out military assault on Israel under a Unified Arab Command, but is on bad, or at the best hardly cordial terms with the other states involved, the UAR, Jordan and Syria. The Party would like, however, to play a greater part in Arab affairs than it does now, and there are signs that it may be attempting, however ineffectually, to build up its influence through party members in its embassies in Aden, Kuwait, the Sudan, Syria and some other Arab countries. It is also showing increasing interest in developments in the Persian Gulf States.

minority regime, it is also a most divided one. Internal rivalry appears to centre round the two Deputy Prime Ministers, General Saleh.

Mehdi Ammash, who is also Minister of the Interior, and General Hardan Abdel Ghaffar al. Takriti, the Minister of Defence. They are both of them old hands at political intrigue, but whereas Ammash favours rapprochement with the Syrian Baeath and extreme measures, both against "reaction" abroad and opposition at home, and is supported by the left-wing and extremer members of the Party such as Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Shaikhli, Minister of

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Foreign Affairs, Saddam al Takriti and Abdullah Sallum al Samarrai, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, Takriti, with the bulk of the Ba athist officers in the Armed Forces behind him, and the support of. the President, is inclined to follow less radical and more traditional Ba ath policies. So far the two men have been evenly matched, but Takriti, despite support in the Army, is mistrusted on account of the part he is alleged to have played in the fall of the regime in 1963, and it is noteworthy that he is not a member of the Regional Command Council. Were either ever to feel that they had the advantage they would no doubt move against the other in a repetition of the mini-coup of 30 July.

#### V. Conclusions.

22. It must inevitably be concluded that this is a Government of few strengths and a great many weaknesses. We regime which is concerned primarily with the problem of its own survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so many others of its kind through having come to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to employ to remain there. Being conscious of its unpopularity and its minority status it

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tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propaganda and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents.

23. It has failed conspicuously to improve its image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups and it is intolerant of the slightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sizable minorities in the Kurds, the Shilis and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to sacrifice some of its extreme ideology, and ready to compromise to a far greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remote from popular support as any of its predecessors. 24. As remarked above it is a highly Clitist organisation which has almost no grass roots. Its system of recruitment and its structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however admirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the same weaknesses as the old Wafd party in Egypt, a first class electioneering machine, but in power inefficient, corrupt and given to divisiveness.

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25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into partizan violence in the tough climate of Iraqi politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom Ba'athism is largely a convenient political label, whose nationalism is in complete contradiction to its pan-Arabism. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the bourgeois strata of Iragi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students. It is thus the party of a very small segment of Iraqi society. Prior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was regarded with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deepen a popular dislike and distrust, which the present regime has done little to dissipate. The gap between the people and the Party, between its own ideology and the realities of the exercise of power, grows progressively So long, however, as it can command

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military support of the sort suggested in paragraph 9 above it is likely to remain in power for what could be quite some time.

Middle East Section, FCO Research Department. 31 July, 1969.

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#### Annex A

#### The Regional Command Council in Iraq

Ahmed Hassan al Bakr,

Saleh Mehdi Ammash,

Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Saddam al Takriti,

Abdullah Sallum al Samarrai,

Izzat Mustapha,

Shafiq al Kamali,

Salah al Bakriti

Abdel Khaliq al Samarrai

Murtada al Hadithi

Muhammed Mahjoub

Samil Nagm

Naim Haddad

Kerim Shaitaf

Fallah al Takriti

Hamid Saigh.

President and Prime Minister.

D/Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

Secretary-General.

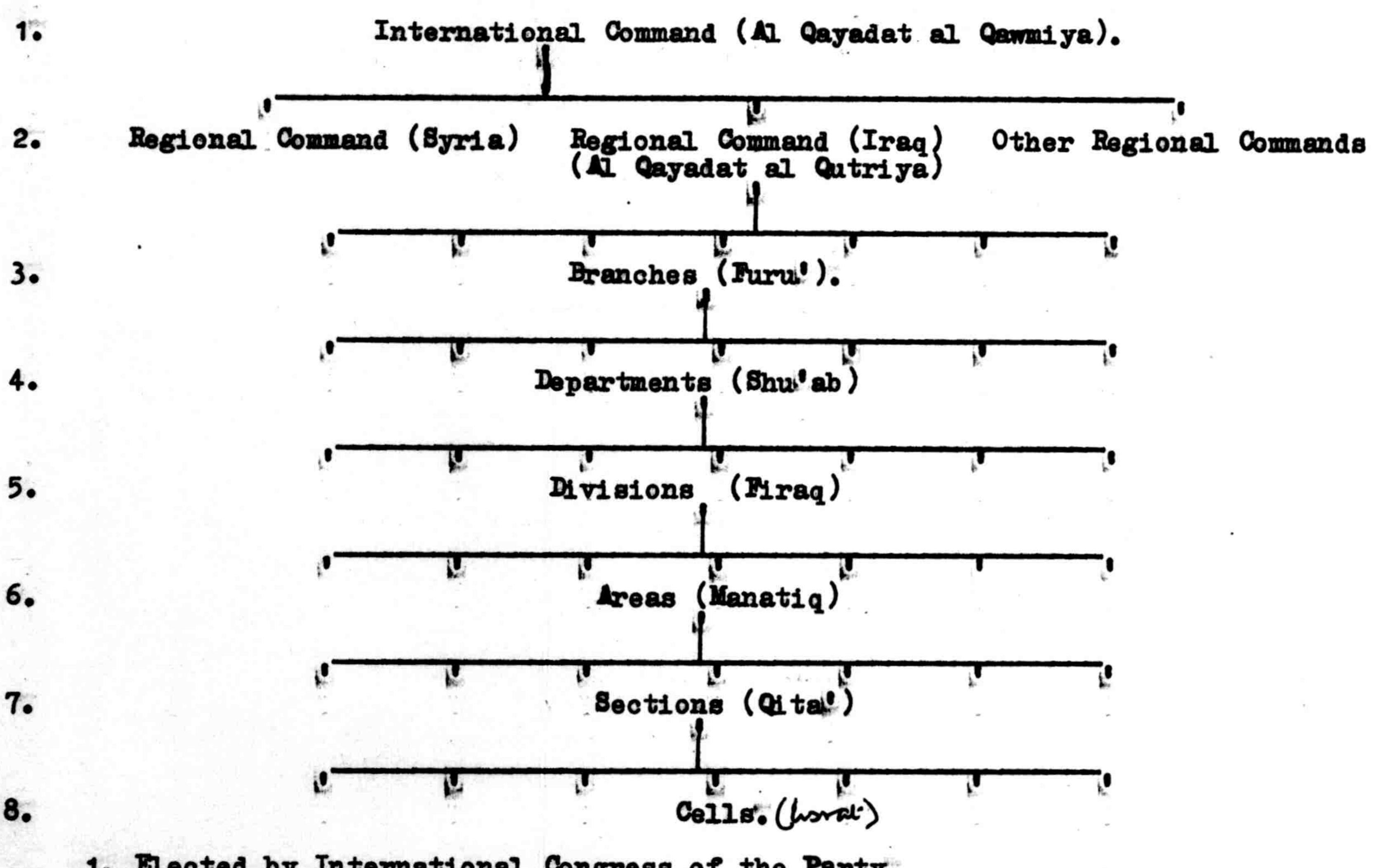
Minister of Culture and Information.

Minister of Health.

Minister for Youth Affairs.

#### Annex B

#### The Structure of the Balath Party



- 1. Elected by International Congress of the Party.
- 2. Elected by Regional Congresses.
- 3. Secretaries of Departments and Party nominees.
- 4. Selected members of Divisions.
- 5. 3 6 Area members.
- 6. Selected Section leaders.
- 7. Cell leaders.
- 8. 3 5 members.

# The Reviewed Command of the Iraci In'ath (July 1968 - July 1969)

#### I. Introduction

The Betath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coun of February 1963 in which Adel Kerin Quain was overthrown and assessinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Adel Salam Aref. The Ba'ath beasted that its colipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to west meersy five years, until July 1968. It is the object of this memorendum to try and place the present rigine in its proper perspective against the background of Iregi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differe from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportuntat and not very united army officers.

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- II. Die Brekermud to the Come of July 1968.
- J. Its nine months in power in 1963 showed clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretive-ness and flittem, its pan-Arabian as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotiam, corruption and lack of administrative ability, and its use of violence and of the National Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.

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4. By the time it fell it had probably achieved the distinction of having been the most unpopular rigine ever to have governed Kraq, and President Aref who, whatever also his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the feibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real finir for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a rigine which was not only detected, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.

5. The Da'eth which was custed in the "apostasy" of Movember, 1963 (1) was no longer a united perty, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militency" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate le'ath groups in Iraq - the rightwing hetch, consisting mainly of old guard Batathists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Refath (A Hab at Dieta & Oute at Iraa), a lestwing group, Marriet and pro-Syrian in idealer (A late at Batel), and a mob mailer, extremist group, of which the leading personality was At Saleh at Seatt, whose gangsterist notheds as Deputy Frime Minister and bees of the Atlant Suart in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the sigime. It was the first of these, the

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7. The new Coversment was thus a coalition between old guerd la'athiets who were conservestive in outlook and who tended also to be anti-Egyptian, anti-Communist and prepared, in the main, to follow fairly moderate, middle of the road policies, - the Talace Group", wood most without younger non with more progressive ideas, who would have liked to establish their rule on as broad (and so not emplaced vely he'athiet) a basis as possible. to some to terms with the Euris and to follow a policy generally of Lrag for the Lragie. S. In such a coalitation it was thus only a matter of time before one of the groups noved agedment the other. The Refethiets were the more experienced and better prepared, and less then a startmight after the sens the the presence in the streets of the testes of the to Armoured Brigade, that a new upbeared was taking place. The Frime Minister meanwhile

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## IV. BETHER METHERS

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20. In foreign affeirs the Party has vecred to the left with the financial and aid agreements with the Soviet blee, 2) its haraconent of the oil companies, its recognition of Part Germany and its personntian of former political leaders on charges of collaboration with imperialism, and its heat for, and execution, of alleged Maniet agents.) It

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22. It must inevitably be complated that this is a Coverement of for strongths and a great ment weeknesses. To rights which is concerned primerly with the problem of the our survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so meny others of the bind through having some to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to ampley to remain there, Being conscious of the unpopularity and the minority status it

tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propagands and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents. 

23. It has failed consylowously to improve ite image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups, and it is intolerent of the alightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sisable minorities in the Burds, the this is and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to secrifice some of 1 to extreme 1dealogy, and ready to compromise to a few greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remete from popular support as any of its predecessors. 24. As remarked above it is a highly flittet organisation which has almost no gress roots. Its system of record thent and 1 to structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however eduirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the some weeknesses as the old wall party in layet, a first class clectionessing machine, but in power inefficient, correst and given to Atvistvemess.

25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into pertisen violence in the tough climate of Iraci politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom he athiem is lengely a convenient political label, whose mationalism is in complete contradiction to its pen-trabian. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the beurgeois strate of Iraqi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students, It is thus the party of a very mall segment of Iregi medety. Frior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was membed with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deeper a popular distince and distrust, which the present rigine has done little to discipate. The gap between the people and the Party. between its own idealogy and the realities the exercise of power, grows progressi wider, to least, however, as it can co

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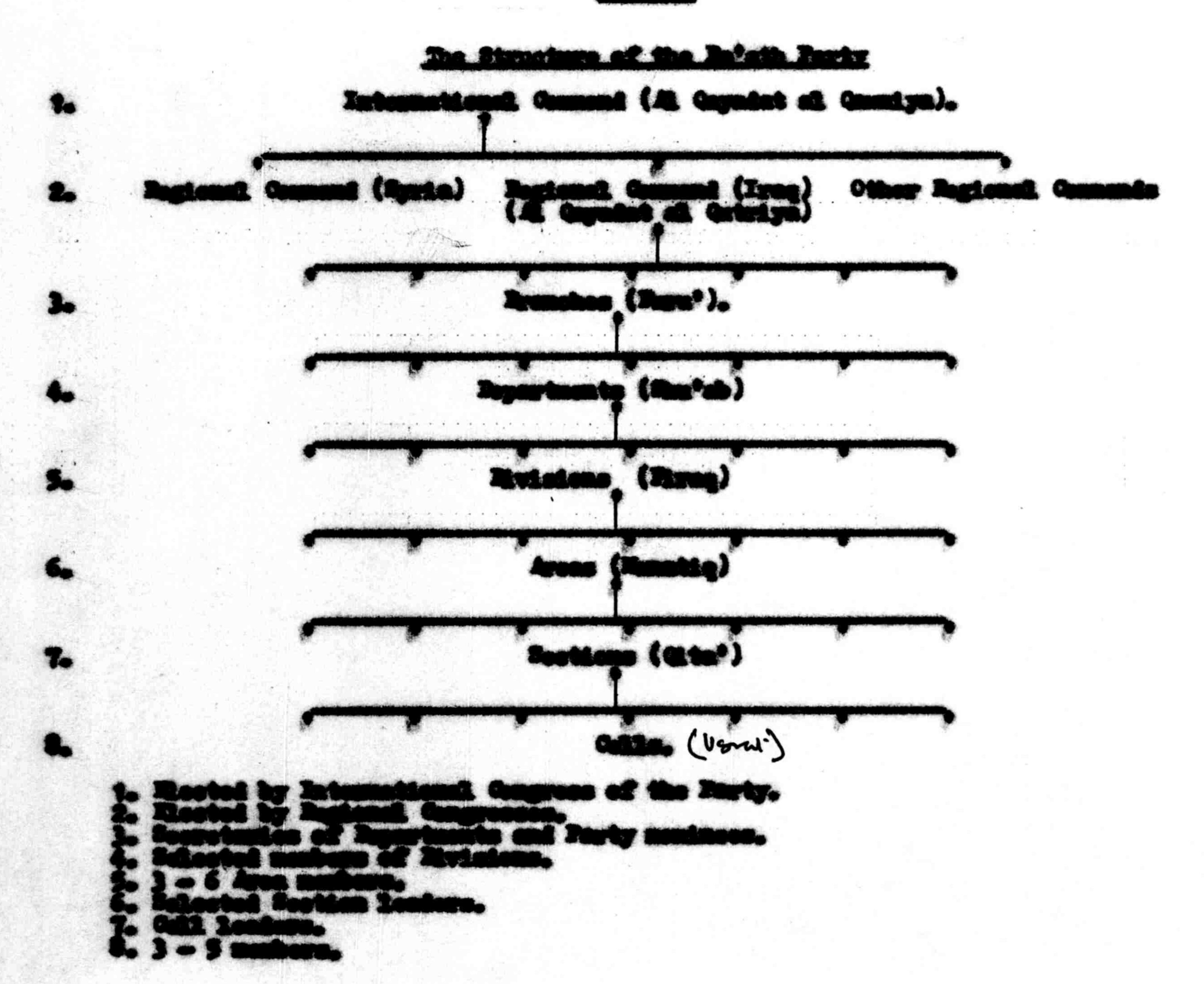
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From

Telephone No. & Ext.

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Department

# RESEARCH DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

The Regional Command of the Iragi Ba'ath

(July 1968 - July 1969)

## I. Introduction

DRAFT

To:-

The Baseath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coup of February 1963 in which Abdel Kerim Qasim was overthrown and assassinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Abdel Salam Aref. The Basath boasted that its eclipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to wait nearly five years, until July 1968.

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present regime in its proper perspective against the background of Iraqi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differs from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportunist and not very united army officers.

- II. The Background to the Coup of July 1968.
- clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretiveness and flitism, its pan—Arabism as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotism, corruption and lack of adminis—trative ability, and its use of violence and of the National Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.
- the distinction of having been the most unpopular regime ever to have governed Iraq, and President Aref who, whatever else his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the foibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real flair for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a regime which was not only detested, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.

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NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

The Ba'ath which was ousted in the "apostasy" of November, 1963 (1) was no longer a united party, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militancy" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate Ba ath groups in Iraq - the rightwing Barath, consisting mainly of old guard Ba athists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Ba'ath (Al Hizb al Ba'ath fi Qutr al Iraq), a leftwing group, Marxist and pro-Syrian in ideology (Al Ba'ath al Yasiri), and a much smaller, extremist group, of which the leading personality was Ali Saleh al Saadi, whose gangsterist methods as Deputy Prime Minister and boss of the National Guard in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the regime. It was the first of these, the

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<sup>(1)</sup> Two such "apostasies" have taken their place in the canon of current right-wing Barath political jargon - that of 18 November, 1963 resulting in the fall and disintegration of the Party in Iraq, and that of 23 February, 1966, in which Hafiz al Amin's regime in Syria was overthrown in the coup led by Saleh al Jedid.

right-wing Ba ath, which participated in the coup of 17 July, 1968, and then itself carried out the further coup of 30 July; and while it has some claim to be regarded as representative of orthodox Ba athism, it is noticeable that, as happened with previous Ba ath regimes, both in Iraq and Syria, the expediencies of the exercise of power have frequently made nonsense of party doctrine.

III. The Coups of July, 1968.

6. On 17 July, 1968 a number of officers known as the "Palace Group", allegedly also members of the Arab Revolutionary Movement, in conjunction with a number of right-wing Ba'athists carried out a bloodless coup which resulted in the deposition and exile of President Abdel Rahman Aref. The part played by the officers was underlined by the appointment of one of their number, Colonel Abdel Razzag Nayef (Deputy Director of Military Intelligence) as Prime Minister, and of another, Lt.-Colonel Ibrahim Abdel Rahman Daud (0.C. Republican Guard Brigade) as Minister of Defence. The Presidency went to a veteran Ba'athist, General Ahmed Hassan al Bakr, who had been Prime Minister in 1963, and the Ministry of the Interior to another, General Saleh Mehdi Ammash. The key posts in the

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Government were thus allotted to the planners of the 17 July coup, the remainder being given in the main to professionals who were experts in their respective spheres, Salih Kubba at the Ministry of Finance, Nasr al Hani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mahdi Hantoush at the Ministry of Oil.

The new Government was thus a coalition between old guard Ba'athists who were conservative in outlook and who tended also to be anti-Egyptian, anti-Communist and prepared, in the main, to follow fairly moderate, middle of the road policies, and the "Palace Group", most of them younger men with more progressive, ideas, who would have liked to establish their rule on as broad (and so not exclusively Ba'athist) a basis as possible, to come to terms with the Kurds and to follow a policy generally of Iraq for the Iraqis. In such a coalition it was thus only a matter of time before one of the groups moved against the other. The Ba'athis'ts were the more experienced and better prepared, and less

against the other. The Ba'athists were the more experienced and better prepared, and less than a fortnight after the coun the inhabitants of Baghdad were made aware, by the presence in the streets of the tanks of the 10 Armoured Brigade, that a new upheaval was taking place. The Prime Minister meanwhile

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and was there arrested and flown out immediately to Morocco. The Minister of Defence, who was visiting Iraqi units in Jordan, was similarly arrested and deported to Rome. It is believed that the driving force behind the new coup was that very experienced intriguer Saleh Mehdi Ammash, assisted by another ex-officer Ba'athist, Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government. The coup, however, owed much of its success to the defection of the Commander of the Republican Guard who deserted his friends in the "Palace Group" and went over to the Ba'ath.

9. Both coups demonstrated very clearly the present importance of the Guard and, to a lesser extent, of the Baghdad garrison, in the making and unmaking of Governments. The former had been greatly expanded, pampered and heavily armed by Abdel Salam Aref, and it was his successor's refusal to follow the advice of the "Palace Group" which precipitated the coup of 17 July. Again, in the coup of 30 July, it was the attitude of the Guard, or rather of its Commander, which appears to have been decisive, and it would seem that as long as the Government can be certain of the

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loyalty of the Guard and of the garrison of Baghdad it can be fairly confident of remaining in power, and if in addition it has the support of one other Divisional Commander it can consider itself all but invulnerable.

- IV. The Ba ath Administration.
  July 1968 July 1969.
- 10. The Ba ath, a pan-Arab party with a supra-national organisation, has nevertheless built up an elaborate structure on a cell system (see Annex B) typical of a clandestine minority group, which it has indeed been for much of its existence. As a result it has evolved as an isolated, doctrinaire elite with little popular standing, and when it has come to power it has displayed the weaknesses of its development in its lack of the common touch and of the essentials of administrative efficiency.
- 11. As far as policy is concerned the Party is committed nominally to following the dictates of the International Command, but in fact the Regional Commands have a good deal of autonomy, and both in Syria, and even more so in Iraq, have followed independent policies imposed by local conditions, and dictated by personal ambitions. Moreover by the time the Iraqi Ba'ath returned to power in July 1968 the International Command, owing to

- 7 -

a series of "apostasies", had lost much of its influence, and the régime itself is representative of one wing only of Iraqi Ba'athism. It can thus in fact be regarded as no more than a minority group within a minority group.

The framing and direction of policy is in the hands of the Regional Command Council, a body of 16 Ba athists, only six of whom hold office in the Government (see Annex A). The programme which it has sketched out for itself is much concerned with consolidation of its own internal position. The usual lip service is given to pan-krabism and the need to cooperate with other Arab countries, the UAR in particular, but the main emphasis has been laid on the need to allot key posts in the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence and Civil Service to loyal Party members. All services require to be purged of their non-Bath elements and steps are to be taken to indoctrinate sympathetic and malleable material. Further emphasis is laid on the dominant rolle of the Command Council, not more than a third of whom may hold Government posts, security in particular being kept under its direct control.

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13. As regards relations with other Parties efforts were to be made to secure the cooperation of the Masserists, Nationalists and certain Communist groups, with a view to forming a National Front and broadening the basis of its support. From any such Front, however, such religio-political movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front were to be excluded, and every effort was to be made to undermine and destroy rival Ba'ath groups. Finally, a "positive attitude" was to be adopted towards imperialist-inspired plots against the regime. One mistake which was not repeated was that of openly re-establishing the National Guard, the excesses of which had contributed so much to the unpopularity of the 1963 regime. Propaganda was to be used with discretion and Party members were to be given suitable posts where they night make their political influence felt, but emphasis was laid on the need to avoid alarming the people. 14. In foreign policy the programme followed predictable lines, support, as noted above, for pan-Arabism, restricted however, to progressive countries only, military action against Israel and support for guerilla organisations, strengthening of relations with socialist countries, particularly those supporting the Arabs, continuance of the

struggle against western imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and the promotion and consolidation of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf. 15. At home the regime pledged itself to bring the oil companies under national control to settle the Kurdish problem, to expedite agrarian reform and to expand irrigation, in all of which both at home and abroad, the Iraqi Command followed fairly closely timehonoured party doctrines of social reform, secularism, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism and promotion of Arab unity with, however, a greater slant to the left than might have been expected. The regime prides itself on the moderation of its policies, though it is perhaps a contradiction in terms to speak of a moderate Ba'ath, a movement conspicuous always for the extremism of its ideology. Some groups are no doubt more moderate than others, but although the regime now in power describes itself as right-wing, its policies tend to follow patterns set by the USSR and Cuba. . 16. It is to be remembered also that many in the regime are Ba athists for opportunist reasons only. They are preponderently Sunnis from central Iraq who have little political sensibility and not much idea of how to

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achieve such aims as they have and little interest in maintaining such links as still exist with the rump of the International Command, as represented by Aflaq and Bitar. Although opposed in theory to military autocracy, they are many of them ex-officers who have had to rely on the Army both to bring them to power and to keep them there. To a great extent, therefore, they have to adapt their policies to the views of the senior officers among their supporters, and as suggested in paragraph 9 above, the attitude of the Republican Guard and of the Baghdad garrison is of vital significance. The Rigine in Action.

17. Despite a number of attempts to improve its popular image by creation of a National Front the regime so far has had singularly little success, largely because it is prepared to cooperate only on terms which other Parties find unacceptable. The Communists, though interested, want more socialism and less pan-Arabism; nor have they forgetten their persecution at the hands of the Ba'ath National Guard in 1963. They have been alienated also by blatant manipulation of Trade Union elections. Nor have the Ba'ath's efforts to bring in some of the smaller and

- 11 -

less important political groups, the Arab Socialist Movement or the Socialist Unity Party, been any more successful, largely because once again, though to a lesser extent than in 1963, the Ba'ath has shown itself unprepared to compromise.

18. It appears also to have achieved no great success in winning support in the Armed Forces, especially in those units on active service in Jordan and in the north, partly because of the severity of its anti-Ba athist purges, and promotion of junior pro-Ba athists over the heads of senior and more competent officers. It has further destroyed the integrity and efficiency of the Civil Service by placing Ba'athists in all posts of importance regardless of qualifications, and has settled, rather more discreetly than in the past, a number of old scores by indiscriminate arrest and confinement of Masserists, Communists, left-wing Ba'athists and Islamic Front sympathisers, and in extreme cases does not appear to have stopped short of political murder.

19. The year in power has been devoted mainly to the consolidation of its position by methods which have become progressively more severe, and so correspondingly more unpopular.

Increasingly it has had to resort to police methods directed in the main by the National

Security Council in which the most influential voice is that of the doctrinaire and extreme Saddam al Takriti, Secretary-General of the Regional Command. It has shown also intolerance and inability to compromise in its treatment of minorities and foreign, mainly western, interests (the expulsion of the European staff of the Jesuit Hikma University is only one case in point); it has fully lived up to Shi'i apprehensions, and its rather half-hearted efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem have been wholly ineffectual. In domestic affairs it has achieved little and, as remarked above, the efficiency and honesty of the civil service has been depreciated further by the appointment of party members to posts for which they have no qualifications. 20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agree-

20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agreements with the Soviet bloc, (2) its harassment of the oil companies, its recognition of East Germany and its persecution of former political leaders on charges of collaboration

<sup>(2)</sup> Recent examples are the sulphur deal with Poland, the agreement between INOC and Machinoexport (USSR) for supply of oil equipment and technical help; the loan of \$70 million from the USSR for development of the North Rumeila oilfield, and the \$84 million credit from East Germany for industrial projects.

with imperialism. It favours an all-out military assault on Israel under a Unified Arab Command, but is on bad, or at the best hardly cordial terms with the other states involved, the UAR, Jordan and Syria. The Party would like, however, to play a greater part in Arab affairs than it does now, and there are signs that it may be attempting, however ineffectually, to build up its influence through party members in its embassies in Aden, Kuwait, the Sudan, Syria and some other Arab countries. It is also showing increasing interest in developments in the Persian Gulf States, where it sees itself as the champion of Arabism against the ambitions and encroachments of Iran. on the whole the regime supports the creation of the Union of Arab Emirates, it would be unlikely to tolerate for long the existence of the "feudal reactionary" sheikhdoms which would compose it.

21. Not only is the Ba'ath an unpopular minority regime, it is also a most divided one. Internal rivalry appears to centre round the two Deputy Prime Ministers, General Saleh Mehdi Ammash, who is also Minister of the Interior, and General Hardan Abdel Chaffar al Takriti, the Minister of Defence. They are

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both of them old hands at political intrigue, but whereas Ammash favours rapprochement with the Syrian Ba'ath and extreme measures, both against "reaction" abroad and opposition at home, and is supported by the left-wing and extremer members of the Party such as Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saddam al Takriti and Abdullah Sallum al Samarrai, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, Takriti, a highly skilled and opportunist tactician, with the bulk of the Ba athist officers in the Armed Forces behind him, and the support of the President, is inclined, for his own purposes, to follow less radical and more traditional Ba'ath policies. So far the two men have been evenly matched, but Takriti, despite support in the Army, is mistrusted on account of the part he is alleged to have played in the fall of the regime in 1963, and it is noteworthy that he is not a member of the Regional Command Council. Were either ever to feel that they had the advantage they would no doubt move against the other in a repetition of the mini-coup of 30 July. If Takriti were to lose the President would fall with him.

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#### V. Conclusions

22. It must inevitably be concluded that this is a Government of few strengths and a great many weaknesses. No regime which is concerned primarily with the problem of its own survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so many others of its kind through having come to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to employ to remain there. Being conscious of its unpopularity and its minority status it tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propaganda and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents. 23. It has failed conspicuously to improve its image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups. and it is intolerant of the slightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sizable minorities in the Eurds, the Shi is and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to sacrifice some of its extreme ideology, and ready to compromise to a far greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remote from popular support as any of its predecessors.

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24. As remarked above it is a highly Clitist organisation which has almost no grass roots. Its system of recruitment and its structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however admirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the same weaknesses as the old Wafd party in Egypt, a first class electioneering machine, but in power inefficient, corrupt and given to divisiveness. 25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into partizan violence in the tough climate of Iragi politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom Ba'athism is largely a convenient political label, and whose nationalism is in complete contradiction to its pan-Arabism. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the bourgeois strata of Iraqi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students. It is thus the party of a very

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small segment of Iraqi society. Prior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was regarded with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deepen a popular dislike and distrust, which the present regime has done little to dissipate. The gap between the people and the Party, between its own ideology and the realities of the exercise of power, grows progressively wider. So long, however, as it can command military support of the sort suggested in paragraph 9 above it is likely to remain in power for what could be quite some time.

FCO Research Department. 5 August. 1969.

## Annex A

## The Regional Command Council in Iraq

Ahmed Hassan al Bakr,

Saleh Mehdi Ammash,

Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Saddam al Takriti,

Abdullah Sallum al Samarrai,

Izzat Mustapha,

Shafiq al Kamali,

Salah al Takriti

Abdel Khaliq al Samarrai

Murtada al Hadithi

Muhammed Mahjoub

Sami Nagm

Naim Haddad

Kerim Shaitaf

Fallah al Takriti

Hamid Saigh.

President and Prime Minister.

D/Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

Secretary-General.

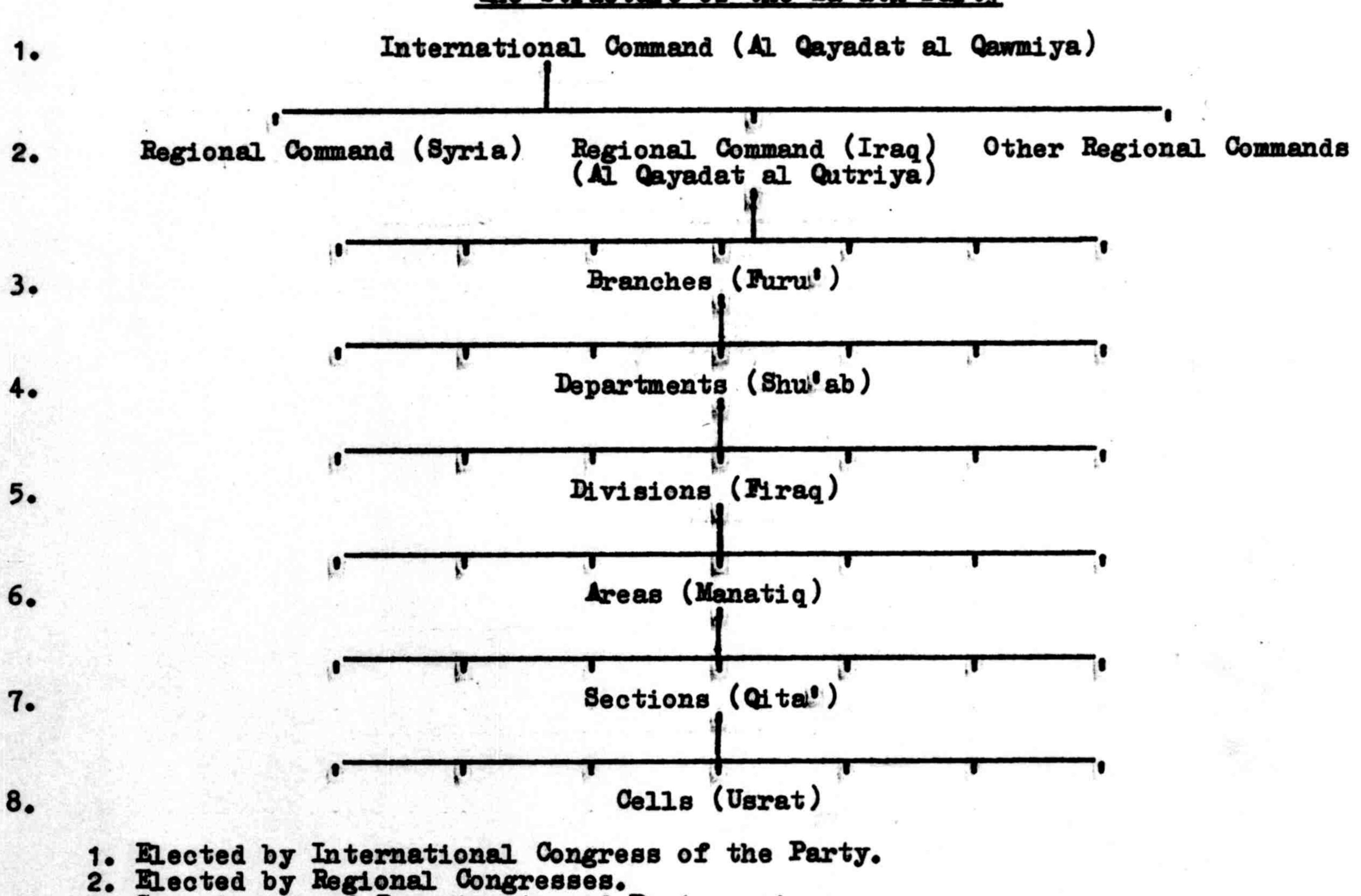
Minister of Culture and Information.

Minister of Health.

Minister for Youth Affairs.

#### Annex B

#### The Structure of the Ba'ath Party



- 3. Secretaries of Departments and Party nominees.
- 4. Selected members of Divisions.
- 5. 3 6 Area members.
- 6. Selected Section leaders.
- 7. Cell leaders.
- 8. 3 5 members.



(RR 6/18)

13 August, 1969.

Dear Chancery,

We enclose herewith a copy of the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath" on which we should very much welcome your comments.

Yours ever.

The Chancery,
British Embassy,
BAGHDAD.

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(RR 6/18)

24 Movember, 1969.

Dear Chamoury,

We should be grateful if we could now have your communic on the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Be ath" sant under cover of our letter of 13 August.

Yours ever-

PERSONAL DEPARTMENT

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British Embassy,

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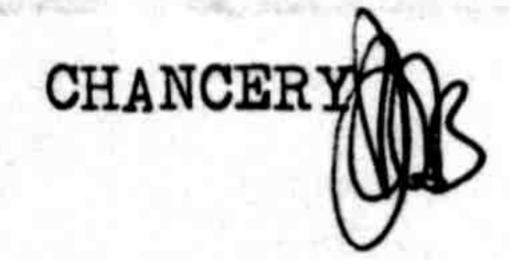


20 December, 1969.

Dear Department,

We are sorry for our delay in sending comments on the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath" sent under cover of your letter of 13 August and will forward them to you as soon as possible.

Yours ever,



Research Department, F.C.O.

LAST PAPER

RESTRICTED

Draft Memorandum, 'The Regional Command Of The Iraqi Ba'ath (July 1968 - July 1969)'. Regional Command Of The Iraqi Ba'ath. 20 Dec. 1969. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 51/100. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107460100/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=64bbcf5e&pg=1. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.